



## School improvement is team effort in Henderson

By Nancy Satterfield  
Henderson County Schools

Districts and schools throughout Kentucky are changing and adopting new strategies and ideas for school improvement. But what process do educators use to determine which direction to follow?

Committee meetings, feedback surveys and opinions provide some answers. However, educators still must question: Are these strategies and ideas based on research findings? Can they be applied to any and all schools?

Henderson County Schools has found the answer that fits their schools — and educators there didn't have to look beyond the Kentucky Department of Education's "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement" Scholastic Review Process to find a program that works. Four years ago, Henderson County Schools had a school in each low-performing category (Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3) in the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

A Scholastic Audit team, comprised of educators and trained community volunteers from outside the school

district, conducted a Level 3 audit at South Heights Elementary. Two other elementary schools underwent Scholastic Reviews, which at the time were conducted by district and regional service center staff. The two schools were identified as Level 1 and Level 2 assistance schools by their CATS scores.

The faculty at South Heights Elementary embraced the audit process and welcomed the team's recommendations for improvement. The school adopted the slogan "We Succeed — No Exceptions — No Excuses" and began the move from a 2000 academic index of 48.2 to an index of 79.3 in 2004. The school achieved a growth of 31.1 points over five years!

Fordham University selected South Heights Elementary as one of six schools in the nation to receive the National School Change award in June 2004. It is the first Kentucky school to receive the designation, which is given for a school's "purposeful, sustainable, positive change in achievement and culture of the school."

After seeing initial, positive changes  
See **SCHOOL** on Page 9

## Teacher Academies offer PD that impacts student learning

By Faun S. Fishback  
ffishbac@kde.state.ky.us

Like many Kentucky teachers, Ohio County Middle School teacher Danielle Cassady no longer considers summer as an extended vacation from the classroom. Instead, summer break gives her time to expand her professional knowledge, network with other content teachers and have a good time learning more about teaching.

Cassady, an eighth-grade language arts teacher, is a regular participant in summer professional development programs, including the Arts Academy sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Education. The department contracts with professional development providers to offer Teacher Academies that give teachers Kentucky-specific, standards-based content and instructional strategies they can use to enhance student learning and performance in the core content areas.

These weeklong summer professional development academies are delivered

through standards-based units of study and offer teachers research-based instructional strategies and activities, "free stuff," stipends and classroom grants. The department makes Teacher Academies accessible to teachers by offering sessions in different regions of the state. Teachers also participate in follow-up meetings to network, report on results and receive additional professional development.

In 2003, Cassady attended the Arts Academy held in western Kentucky by The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. She and other teachers studied dance and drama under the instruction of professionals from the Louisville performing arts center, including the director of Stage One children's theater. (The Arts Academy offers visual arts and music content in alternate years.)

"It was the best PD I've had," said Cassady. "It was really wonderful to work  
See **TEACHER** on Page 10



Photo by Rick McComb

### Love on a leash

Collins Lane Elementary primary student Blake Clarkson reads to Bruiser, a St. Bernard mix dog, while the dog's trainer Cindy Barker listens. Students at the Franklin County school are improving their literacy skills and gaining self-confidence by reading aloud to loving — and attentive — dogs during class.

## Board still discussing decisions on state's writing assessment

By Cathy Lindsey  
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

The Kentucky Board of Education at its February meeting heard presentations, had in-depth discussions and made decisions on a number of items including the 2007 writing assessment, school funding and local school district issues.

The board agreed to approve the Kentucky Department of Education's recommendations — based in part on input from nearly 9,000 Kentucky teachers — for the state's writing assessment. The board will consider spreading the writing assessment over more grade levels, review the number of pieces required for writing portfolios, revisit the scoring process for writing portfolios and the on-demand writing component, and analyze the impact of the weight of the two assessment components. (See the February 2005 issue of *Kentucky Teacher* for more information.)

The approved recommendations will serve as the framework of the writing assessment in 2007. Other issues within the framework will be addressed in coming months, including the code

of ethics, comprehensive professional development plan and writing performance standards.

The board also discussed continuing the current format for assessing practical living/vocational studies and arts and

See **BOARD** on Page 10

### What's Inside

Seeing is believing .....	3
Students learn that school counts ..	4
More students taking CATS Online 2005 .....	5
Covington schools target truancy....	5
Technology supports instruction and CATS assessment .....	6
Tommy Floyd returns to alma mater with a goal .....	7
Eubank fifth-graders gain business savvy .....	8
CATS test items released.....	11

# Bulletin Board



Photo by Rick McComb

## Events

### Teacher Appreciation

National Teacher Day will be celebrated May 3, during National Teacher Appreciation Week, May 2-6.  
[www.nea.org/teacherday/index.htm](http://www.nea.org/teacherday/index.htm)

### Norton Center

The Norton Center for the Arts at Centre College in Danville announces a special performance for students. “Bowfire,” a musical that explores styles of music for the violin and fiddle, will be March 30 at 10 a.m. Teacher guides are available on the Web site. Tickets are \$6.  
Contact: Box office (859) 236-4692  
[www.nortoncenterforthearts.com](http://www.nortoncenterforthearts.com)

### Old Fort Harrod

Old Fort Harrod State Park in Harrodsburg is available for school field trips year-round. Costumed interpreters are at the renovated park from March 16 through Nov. 30. Cost is \$2 per student in groups of 20 or more.  
<http://parks.ky.gov/ftharrd2.htm>

### 4-H camps

Kentucky 4-H is looking for adults to manage four coed residential 4-H camps this summer. Youngsters ages 9 through 14 will attend the weeklong camps at Carlisle, London, Dawson Springs and Nancy. Camps open May 31 and close July 29. Camp managers are responsible for supervising paid and volunteer staff, as well as administrative duties and camp management.  
Salary range is \$1,300-\$2,000 a month. Managers receive private living quarters, meals and use of a vehicle during the camp week. Housing is available for married couples. Camp managers’ training session is April 29-May 1, and camp instructors’ training is May 15-20.  
Contact: Donna Fox, (859) 257-5961, [dfox@uky.edu](mailto:dfox@uky.edu)  
[www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/4h/camp](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/4h/camp)

### “Outstanding Teacher” nominations

Murray State University is accepting nominations for its 10th annual Kentucky Outstanding Teacher Award. One full-time teacher at each level — primary/elementary, middle grades and high school will receive \$1,000.  
A letter of nomination (maximum 750 words) must include one section on each of three criteria: demonstrated excellence in teaching, contributions to parental involvement in learning and commitment to school excellence. In addition, to the nominee’s e-mail and mailing addresses, include the nominator’s name, title, mailing address, e-mail address and relationship to the nominee (self-nominations accepted). A letter of support from an administrator in the nominee’s school district, if the nomination is by someone other than an administrator, must be included.  
The deadline for nominations is April 15. Send the nomination as an e-mail attachment to [george.patmor@coe.murraystate.edu](mailto:george.patmor@coe.murraystate.edu) or mail to Dean’s Office/Education, Murray State University, 3101 Alexander Hall, Murray, KY 42071-3340. Refer questions to George Patmor at the same e-mail address or (270) 762-3832.

### Girls in Science

The University of Kentucky invites teachers to participate in summer workshops on creating local Girls in Science clubs that encourage young women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. All expenses will be paid, and teachers will receive a \$300 stipend to attend the summer workshop and \$500 to help create science clubs in their schools.  
For dates and to download an application, visit <http://cdar.uky.edu>.  
For more information, contact Sondra Floyd, University of Kentucky, at (859) 257-4401 or e-mail [sondrafloyd@uky.edu](mailto:sondrafloyd@uky.edu).

## Resources

### KSSN

The Kentucky Science Support Network (KSSN) is designed to provide classroom teachers a direct link to “experts” across the state. Teachers can select an area of expertise and instantly generate a list of people and organizations willing to provide content information.  
<http://oapd.kde.state.ky.us/kssn>

### Earth Day

April 22 has been designated Earth Day. The Kentucky Geographic Alliance has compiled a list of resource sites for teachers to explore the content of Earth Day.  
[www.kga.org/EarthDay.htm](http://www.kga.org/EarthDay.htm)

### Utility offers teaching tools

LG&E Energy has launched an online safety program for K-12 students in their service territory. Electric Universe ([www.lgeenergy.com/electricuniverse](http://www.lgeenergy.com/electricuniverse)) offers more than 400 Web pages of informative, educational resources that include lesson plans and projects to help teachers educate students about electricity.  
Additional safety resources include the Louie the Lightning Bug Series, targeted for primary students,

and Mini City Electric Safety Demonstrations, designed for grades 4-12.  
For more information on these programs, visit [www.lgeenergy.com/kids](http://www.lgeenergy.com/kids) or call (800) 786-7547 to schedule a safety demonstration.

### Changes in college entrance exam

Beginning in March, some junior and senior high school students will be taking the new Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) college entrance exam. The SAT has eliminated the analogy and quantitative comparison sections. More critical reading passages and higher-level mathematics questions will be added. The biggest change will be the new writing section, which includes a writing test (a 25-minute section asking students to write an essay supporting their position on a given topic), as well as multiple-choice grammar questions.  
For more information, to register for the SAT or to view practice questions, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr  
[jbarr@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jbarr@kde.state.ky.us)



# Commissioner's Comments

## On a tour of Kentucky's Proficient schools, seeing is believing

By Gene Wilhoit  
gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us

The fourth- and fifth-grade choir sang the Pledge of Allegiance. A bell choir of kindergartners, earnest and precise, performed “Ode to Joy” and “Twinkle, Twinkle.” Then the house lights dimmed, the music swelled and a spotlight hit the wall in the gym to illuminate a majestic banner, slowly unfurling to reveal this message:

West Louisville Elementary  
NCLB Blue Ribbon School.

This was one stop on my tour of Kentucky schools that have reached the high standard of Proficiency (100 on a 140-point scale). West Louisville Elementary, in the high-performing Daviess County School District, has a combined accountability index of 109.7 for the 2003-2004 cycle of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) — almost 10 points above proficiency, 10 years ahead of schedule.

So far, 23 of the roughly 1,200 schools in the state have already reached the goal, and I am visiting every one of them — to congratulate the whole school community and also to see public education at its best.

There is no part of my job that I love better than visiting our schools and seeing classrooms in action. No image sticks in my mind like that of a child's face, animated at the moment of a learning epiphany. No experience better proves the importance and validity of what we are about in Kentucky than visiting a great school where children are happy, making friends and learning at the very highest levels in the country.

Seeing is believing.

And here's what I'm seeing — at Centerfield Elementary in Oldham County; at Male and Manual high schools in Jefferson County; at West Louisville, Tamarack, Utica, East View, Meadowlands and Highland elementary schools in Daviess County.

I'm seeing:

Highly qualified, exceptional professionals — principals and teachers who are dogged about continuous improvement and who really believe in every single child. You know the statements we make — that all children can learn at high levels and that all means all. Some doubters still dismiss these as platitudes and clichés. But for the teachers in these schools, these statements are the universal truths that guide their work every day. Seeing is believing.

Students who are engaged in work that a lot of adults don't think they can do. Kindergartners, for example, are writing essays and loving the process. Children with scarce resources on the home front, who look you in the eye, tell you what they're working on, why it's important

and how they know whether they're doing a good job. Seeing is believing.

Whole school communities — not just principals and teachers, but custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, parents, business leaders, everyone — united behind the goal of high-level learning for every child and finding a way to contribute. To see an entire community where goals are surpassed and everyone is excited about going further is to believe.

The ceremony at West Louisville, “Celebrating Student Success,” was all about the children — not just building their self-esteem but helping them value the importance of learning.

“We know that when the pencils meet the paper, it's the kids who make the difference,” Principal Connie Morgan told the school assembly as the children looked on. “But CATS or no CATS, Blue Ribbon or no Blue Ribbon, if you're looking for the very best kids in the state, here they are!”

All the children were wearing Blue Ribbon T-shirts that said “I'm a Winner.” The school couldn't afford something like that, so local community sponsors bought them for the students at a cost of \$2,000.

School custodian, Becky Ray, worked nights and weekends to synchronize the lights and sounds with the PowerPoint presentations and the grand unfurling of the banner. She used fishing line and bobby pins to make that flag unfurl on cue.

The assembly ended with the preschoolers singing “I Like School (And School Likes Me),” and holding signs with letters that spelled, “We see blue ribbons in our future!”

I do, too.

This school never misses a chance to teach or a chance to recognize student work.

Every surface in the school is a teaching opportunity realized. The walls and even the lockers are painted with labeled murals that teach about condensation and precipitation, erosion, pollination, the Animal Kingdom, the U.S. Constitution, our system of checks and balances. Nobody in this school can get a drink of water without being exposed to a lesson from the core content.

All students are engaged in the classroom work. In a lesson on pronouns that I observed, one class used remote controls to register anonymously their answers to questions projected on the wall. (At least, they were supposed to be anonymous. At one point a student leaned into me and whispered: “Your answer didn't record. Press it again!”)

After all the students had answered a question electronically, the teacher could display a bar graph showing how many had answered correctly. They could talk it through each time.



Photo by Rick McComb

Fourth-grader Alexiya McKenzie gets assistance from Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit during mathematics class at Tamarack Elementary School in Daviess County. Tamarack is one of the 23 high-performing schools the commissioner visited recently.

At the end of the day, that teacher can print out a detailed report on each student so she knows exactly which concepts each child has mastered and where each child needs extra, individual help.

Of course, West Louisville is by no means the only school where knowing and caring about each individual student, assessing where each student is and intervening to keep each child caught up is a daily way of life.

These practices take place in every one of the Proficiency schools on the list that accompanies this column — and in the dozens and dozens of schools across Kentucky that are improving rapidly — and knocking on the door to Proficiency.

At East View Elementary, the science lab has a stormscape on one wall, illustrating the science of thunder and lightning.

Students work on experiments in teams, floating paper clips in water, alcohol and water, detergent and water, recording data and sharing observations.

Down the hall, a first-grade reading circle is working on vocabulary and similes.

“What does ‘scrump-tious’ mean?” the teacher asks. Everyone knows!

And later: “What else could a chicken be as fat as?”

A note posted at a teacher's workstation in the computer lab says, “I am here to help — to hear you, encourage you, love and prepare you.”

At Meadowlands Ele-

mentary School students learn about renewable and non-renewable natural resources by using toothpicks to mine the chocolate chips out of cookies. The conversation is lively, and provocative.

“You have to dig out some of the land to get it!”

“She's destroying the ‘earth’ around it!”

“You need to get ALL of it out. Some of it's hidden!”

These school visits underscore that all children can learn at high levels if they have the time, opportunity and support. That high expectations produce high achievement. That results matter in the lives of our children.

And that seeing is believing.

To comment on this topic, e-mail the commissioner at gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us.

Proficiency Schools (2003-2004 CATS Testing Cycle)		
District	School	Comb. Index
Anchorage Independent	Anchorage Elementary	106.2
Clay County	Hacker Elementary	101.3
Daviess County	Deer Park Elementary	111.5
Daviess County	East View Elementary	100.4
Daviess County	Highland Elementary	110.5
Daviess County	Philpot Elementary	100.3
Daviess County	Tamarack Elementary	102.6
Daviess County	Utica Elementary	106.1
Daviess County	West Louisville Elementary	109.7
Fayette County	Maxwell Elementary	100.4
Fayette County	SCAPA at Bluegrass Elementary	100.0
Fayette County	Veterans Park Elementary	106.4
Ft. Thomas Independent	Johnson Elementary	101.6
Graves County	Farmington Elementary	101.2
Jefferson County	duPont Manual High	101.6
Jefferson County	Louisville Male High	100.5
Johnson County	Central Elementary	111.8
Ohio County	Southern Elementary	110.0
Oldham County	Centerfield Elementary	100.2
Oldham County	Goshen at Hillcrest Elementary	103.3
Oldham County	Liberty Elementary	103.7
Oldham County	North Oldham Middle	100.2
Rockcastle County	Brodhead Elementary	104.0



# Students learn that school counts for them

By Cathy Lindsey  
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

As children, we were all probably asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

As young adults, the question becomes more personal, "What do I want to do with my life, and how do I get there?"

Educators in Hopkins County are helping students answer those questions by showing them the correlation between working hard in high school and being successful after graduation. The district's two high schools participate in the High Schools That Work (HSTW) initiative to prepare students for their chosen careers. Seventy-nine schools in Kentucky, including Hopkins County high schools, participate in the initiative.

HSTW is the Southern Regional Education Board's largest and oldest school-improvement initiative for high school and middle grades. More than 1,000 schools in 31 states are using the HSTW framework of 10 key practices to raise student achievement:

- High expectations
- Career/technical studies
- Academic studies
- Challenging curriculum
- Work-based learning
- Teachers working together
- Students actively engaged
- Guidance
- Extra help
- Keeping score

"Schools focusing their improvement plans and professional development around these 10 key practices will be on the road to educational success for all," said Mary Chandler, School-to-Work coordinator at Hopkins County Central High School.

This year, ninth-grade students at both high schools are participating in the district's newest program, called School Counts! The performance-based certificate program is the first of its kind in Kentucky. School Counts! students are expected to be in school every day on time, keep their grades up and take challenging academic courses.

"School Counts! means opportunity for high school students and hope for parents who want their children to succeed," said Superintendent James Lee Stevens.

Hopkins County Schools, Madisonville Community College and local businesses adopted this new community initiative to develop more conscientious students and a more highly qualified local work force.

"It awards students certificates of achievement and scholarships to Madisonville Community College," said Chandler, "and encourages employers to use a school-based certificate that documents student performance during high school."

To qualify for the School Counts! certificate, a student must meet the following criteria:

- Complete high school in eight consecutive semesters
- Obtain a 2.5 grade point average each year
- Achieve a 95 percent attendance and punctuality record

- Take more than the minimum number of credits required for graduation

School administrators in Hopkins County realize that performance in high school can predict how well an individual will do in a job. Their intention is to provide the certificate as a workplace readiness indicator for potential employers. With this certificate, each student can say to an employer, "My work does not have to be repeated. I show up for work. I finish what I start. I go the extra mile."

In the future, participating local employers say they will use the certificates to evaluate job applicants. To date, 250 area businesses have committed to preferential hiring for School Counts! students.

As a bonus, beginning with the class of 2008, all Hopkins County graduates who earn School Counts! certificates will be eligible to receive tuition support of up to \$1,000 per semester for four semesters at Madisonville Community College. This tuition support will be available for students who don't qualify for other types of financial aid.

The Madisonville Community College Foundation, in conjunction with the Madisonville Rotary Club, is conducting a School Counts! Endowment Campaign. More than \$300,000 has been pledged to fund the program thus far.

Community support does not come only in the form of financial contributions.

"The business community is vital to the educational success of students in Hopkins County," said Kitty Davis, School-to-Work coordinator at Madisonville North Hopkins High School. "They serve on committees, provide work-based learning sites, speak to classes, participate in career fairs, and provide motivation to ensure that students value their education."

In addition to the School Counts! program, Hopkins County Schools offer students course options that meet current local and national occupational needs, Chandler, the School-to-Work coordinator, explained.

Through collaboration with postsecondary partners and local industries, Hopkins County students receive high school and college credit for successfully completing courses in computer applications, computer-aided drafting, health sciences and information technology.

"These non-duplicative, integrated courses give students a jump-start on their college credits while keeping costs at a minimum," Chandler said. "It is truly a win-win opportunity for students, parents, high schools, postsecondary institutions and businesses."

The Advisory T.E.A.M. (Team Effort Achieves More) program is another district career preparation effort. At Madisonville North Hopkins, students, teachers and parents work together to plan for the future. Selecting a specific curriculum course of study helps guide each student toward a successful transition to adult life, whether it's postsecondary education, the work force or the military.

Other Hopkins County initiatives include a Freshman Academy to help students make the transition to high school, school-based enterprises to give the students some entrepreneurial experience and a partnership with USA Today to target literacy across the grade levels.

Using the HSTW framework through a wide variety of approaches, Hopkins County is working to prepare students for life's successes.

"Administrators, teachers, students, parents and the business community are working together to set high expectations for students and discover the means to enable students to reach them," Davis said.

For more information on the High Schools That Work initiative, contact state coordinator Diane Sharp at dsharp@kde.state.ky.us or (502) 564-3775.



Photos by Rick McComb

Hopkins County Central freshmen Caitlin Metcalfe, left, and Tianna LeGrand sign contracts agreeing to meet the School Counts! attendance, grades and academic requirements. The new performance-based certificate program is the first of its kind in Kentucky.



Bill Hailey, Madisonville Community College, works with Madisonville North Hopkins High senior Travis Bearden on a video production project that will be submitted to the Oprah Winfrey show in hopes of getting funding to send local students to college.





Photo by Rick McComb

### Teddy bears for tsunami survivors

Anderson County substitute teacher Tina Litkenhus and students Suzanne Lilly and Colt Litkenhus sort some of the more than 400 stuffed animals that students at Robert B. Turner Elementary donated to an orphanage in Sri Lanka following the tsunami that struck Indonesia, India and Thailand. Students wrote letters to survivors and sent cameras in hopes of hearing from some recipients. Litkenhus coordinated the project with the Relief for Sri Lanka organization. Schools throughout Kentucky are raising money and sponsoring service projects to help disaster survivors.

### Fostering Independence:

## More students taking CATS Online 2005

Preparations are under way for CATS Online 2005 to be administered April 18-29 in Kentucky schools. More than 2,000 students with disabilities or limited English proficiency plan to take the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) online.

This reflects a four-fold increase in the number of students who participated in 2004, the second year online testing for the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) tests was available, according to Preston Lewis, a branch manager in the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Exceptional Children Services.

Approximately 40 percent of Kentucky students with disabilities require a "reader" to allow them to participate in the annual state assessments. However, an increasing number of those students are moving from dependence on human support. Instead, they use "text-to-speech" technology (i.e., textreader or screenreader) to read the test independently. (See stories on Page 6.)

To be eligible to use this accommodation, Individual Education Programs for students with disabilities or Program Services Plans for students with limited English proficiency

must include the need for a "reader." This support must be provided on a routine basis for classroom instruction.

Taking the test online does not lessen a student's need for local support. Online testing actually makes schools and districts more responsible before testing for ensuring readiness with all computer hardware and software, and addressing all logistical and technical support issues, Lewis said.

Surveys of students and teachers after 2004 state testing indicate that the online assessment helps students be more engaged. Many students said taking the test online was "easier" and "fun" — not comments ever heard from students or staff about use of a human reader, Lewis said.

Teachers said that taking the test online has totally changed the way their students feel about the assessment, as well as how they personally feel about it. Teachers also said that students taking the test online tend to take more time and can be observed actively rereading test questions, as well as their responses.

Almost 90 percent of the students surveyed in 2004 said they thought they scored better taking the test on the computer. While further data analysis is required to make any judgments

about improvement in test scores, increased student receptiveness to participation in the state assessment is certainly a positive step, Lewis said.

What is clear is that more students with and without disabilities will be taking the CATS Online 2005. One student who took the online test in 2004, said he prefers taking the KCCT online "because I don't have to be read to by people, and it is really awesome."

Directions and information for participation in CATS Online 2005 are available on the Internet at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand of the page and select "CATS Online Assessment." If you have questions, email [catsol@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:catsol@kde.state.ky.us) or contact Linnie Lee at (502) 564-7056 or Preston Lewis at (502) 564-4970.

## Covington schools target truancy

Parents, business owners and Covington residents are working together to improve attendance in local public and private schools this year. A new campaign that targets truancy encourages local adults to ask school-age youth, "Why aren't you in school today?"

The "Why Aren't You in School Today?" campaign, supported by Covington (Independent) Schools, the Diocese of Covington and Covington Partners in Prevention, puts community supports in place to get and keep students in school. Partners in Prevention is a nonprofit organization that promotes positive youth development and helps schools in Covington reduce barriers to student learning.

More than 23,000 student absences have been recorded in Covington (Independent) Schools since the start of this school year. The campaign, which began in January, targets all Covington students. However, the focus will be on students at Two Rivers Middle School and Holmes Junior-Senior High School, where most absences occur.

Letters have been sent to parents of school-age children to explain the campaign. Business owners received packets containing "Why Aren't You in School Today?" window decals and posters, a calendar for local public and private schools, and a "tip sheet" with pointers on talking with students about how important their education and

attendance at school are to the future of Covington.

A Neighborhood Attendance Watch is being established as part of the campaign to make adults more aware of young people who aren't in school. Additionally, the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky is displaying "Why Aren't You in School Today?" ads on its buses and bus shelters. Posters and ads help promote the positive reasons local students have for attending school.

At Holmes Junior-Senior High incentive programs are in place for students with perfect attendance. A Ninth-grade Incentive League provides rewards to teachers for helping get students to school regularly.

For the Covington (Independent) district, an increase in attendance would provide more state money to the schools. Absentees this fall cost the district more than a half million dollars in funding, according to Mike Groh, co-director of pupil personnel.

However, education is the bottom line to keeping students in school. The campaign seeks to let students know that school is important to their futures and that they need to be in school every day.

For more information about the "Why Aren't You in School Today?" campaign, contact Warner A. Allen, Covington (Independent) Schools, (859) 392-3188, [wallen@covington.k12.ky.us](mailto:wallen@covington.k12.ky.us) or visit [www.readytolearn.us](http://www.readytolearn.us) on the Internet.



Posters distributed by the "Why Aren't You in School Today?" campaign to Covington-area businesses emphasize the positive reasons why students go to school every day.

### Track 2005 legislation online

Kentuckians can follow the status of proposed legislation during the 2005 session of the General Assembly on the state's Web site. The online service, Bill Watch, is available at [www.kentucky.gov/billwatch/](http://www.kentucky.gov/billwatch/).

The free service connects Kentuckians interactively with proposed legislation. Those accessing Bill Watch can create a custom profile that organizes bills they have selected to track and monitor based on keywords, sponsors, committees, subjects or bill numbers.

Kentuckians can track an unlimited number of bills and receive e-mail notification of changes in a bill's status.

In addition, users can access the bill's status, summary, amendments, history and full text without having to take any additional steps.

The Kentucky Legislature, the Legislative Research Commission and Kentucky.gov, the state's official Web site, are partners in Bill Watch.

# Technology supports instruction and CATS assessment

## Gold Team’s success with online testing opens doors in Nicholas County

By Brenda Lawrence  
Nicholas County Schools

We started using Read and Write Gold in April 2003 at Nicholas County Elementary after Phyllis Guthrie, district technology coordinator, returned from a workshop where she had seen the assistive software demonstrated. After viewing the program and seeing firsthand the potential it had to help my students, I was anxious to start using it in my classroom.

Despite my own very basic technology skills, I started using Read and Write Gold with my seven end-of-primary students to help them write portfolio pieces to take to fourth grade. When our school took scrimmage tests to prepare for the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) tests, my students took their tests online using Read and Write Gold.

My seven students became known as the “Gold Team.” On CATS test day, we wore T-shirts that designated us as members of the Gold Team.

We used the school library’s mini lab and recruited the help of librarian, Rhonda Murrell and her instructional aide, Danita Harmon. As we made our

way to the lab for testing, we got high fives and cheers from the staff we met in the hall.

What a way for the Gold Team to start a day of testing! The team spirit was incredible! The students thought they could do anything.

During testing, I watched the students and saw them read the passages numerous times.

In the past, when I was their reader, they might ask me to repeat a passage or question once

but very rarely more than that. This computer program gives them the opportunity to reread as many times as they need to understand the passage and the questions and answers.

Results for the seven students who took the CATS test online were very good. In science, six students scored Apprentice and one scored High Novice. In reading, four students scored Proficient, one scored Apprentice and two scored Novice.

With the use of Read and Write Gold, I saw these students’ self-esteem grow by leaps and bounds. They became

independent learners! Later, when they took a classroom test, they could go to their assigned computer and take it without my being there to assist them.

When I asked one student what he liked best about Read and Write Gold, he said, “I

don’t have to ask a grown-up to read it to me.”

My students also became teachers. They helped some classroom teachers and other students better understand the program.

To make the assistive software available to all special education and 504 students, we used IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) funds to install and upgrade one new workstation in their classrooms. We also added a scanner to each station. (Read and Write Gold does require extra memory to run properly.)

I am using Read and Write Gold with my end-of-primary students again this school year. We have an exit criteria test that my students take every nine-week grading period. Third-grade teachers also use the assistive software to give make-up tests to

all students.

Our technology instructional aide, Vicky Fleming, makes sure all students in our school have the opportunity to work with Read and Write Gold in our computer lab. This year, all end-of-primary students are learning to keyboard using AlphaSmarts software, which should better prepare them for typing portfolios and using Read and Write Gold. Most of our students also prefer to scribe for themselves now that they have this extra help.

Because of the success demonstrated by our “Gold Team” last year, all special education students at Nicholas County Elementary will take the CATS test online this spring.

For more information, contact Brenda Lawrence, primary special education teacher, Nicholas County Elementary, (859) 289-3785, blawrence@nicholas.k12.ky.us.

To learn more about using assistive technology to deliver curriculum, implement instruction and assess learning for students with diverse learning needs, go to the Kentucky Department of Education’s Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), click on “KDE QuickLinks” and select “Universal Design for Learning.”

*“I saw these students’ self-esteem grow by leaps and bounds. They became independent learners!”*

## Bell County faculty and students learn together to use Read and Write Gold

The Bell County School District is piloting a program at Page School Center that will tie together many new educational initiatives into one neat teaching and learning package for the benefit of all students. Teachers, administrators and students are participating in a unique training program where they are learning together how to use the assistive software, Read and Write Gold as a reading and writing support tool.

“This is awesome!” was the review of one student after the first training session, according to Doris Blevins, a special education teacher at the school.

More than 1,000 schools throughout Kentucky have purchased Read and Write Gold. It helps students access instruction using computer functions such as speaking-word prediction, spell and grammar checking, adjustable font size, text-to-speech conversion, and Internet organization tools.

Members of the Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP), instituted in Bell County Schools by Superintendent George Thompson, are helping implement the new learning program at the center. The district is capitalizing on the STLP members’ strong interest in using technology to help other students and staff with special service projects.

Bell County Schools has had a site license for Read and Write Gold for about

four years, according to Susie Williams, director of special education. However, implementation has been slow due to technology-related issues and training needs. Using STLP members to train staff and students to use the software is giving the program a jump-start, she added.

Renee Leach, a technology/curriculum/assistive technology consultant with the Upper Cumberland Special Education Cooperative, is helping the district pilot this project at Page School Center. The school’s teaching staff, with Leach’s support, is developing an action plan. The plan includes additional hands-on training for fourth-, fifth- and seventh-grade students and teachers, creation of digital files using the scanning feature in Read and Write Gold, analysis of program data and guidance in using the program to support students with written-expression difficulties. Several students with difficulty accessing printed text have learned to use the software to read independently.

“It’s great to know that students are receiving training and actually utilizing the program following training. This ongoing effort will hopefully provide the district with the support necessary to sustain the use of the program,” said Leach. “The relationship between the state cooperatives and the school districts has proven to be a valuable partnership for providing training and



Photo by Susie Williams, Bell County Schools

Renee Leach, a consultant with the Upper Cumberland Special Education Cooperative, helps Nekoda Hatmaker, a Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) member, during an after-school training session to acquaint Page School Center STLP members and teachers with Read and Write Gold software.

consultation services. We are excited to be a part of this important role.”

Parents have been invited to participate in after-school “clinics.” The district furnishes transportation for these sessions to help parents get to know more about the assistive software.

“With a cadre of trained STLP students, a core group of trained staff, and supportive parents, we believe we will see the utilization of Read and Write Gold really take off,” said Williams.

“Renee Leach is a skilled trainer with experience in both general education and special education settings. Her experience will be invaluable to demonstrating that this software is extremely valuable to all students, and not just those with educational disabilities.”

Contact: Susie Williams, (606) 337-7051, [swilliams@bell.k12.ky.us](mailto:swilliams@bell.k12.ky.us) or Renee Leach, (606) 549-7000, Ext. 34.



# Principal Tommy Floyd returns to his alma mater with a goal of improving academic successes

By Joy Barr

jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

A school principal is aptly referred to as the guiding force within the educational community. A principal is a strong leader who gives direction yet motivates academically and behaviorally in a consistent manner. At Somerset High School, this leader is Principal Tommy Floyd. He teaches, coaches and assists others — all in an effort to improve the success that has become a tradition of excellence in this independent school district.

The Kentucky Association of Secondary School Principals (KASSP) recently recognized Floyd as its High School Principal of the Year. He also was a recipient of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators' Administrator of the Year award. Both awards were based on the tremendous growth and improvement in the overall learning environment at Somerset High. "The awards belong to the entire school," emphasized Floyd. A caring staff and generous community support are instrumental to the success of the school, he added.

Teachers are very supportive and acknowledge Floyd's efforts. English teacher Debi VanHoose says, "Mr. Floyd is a dynamo of energy and enthusiasm, and as such, he serves as a great motivator for his faculty, staff and student body. This principalship is more than employment to him; it is how he lives and breathes. His blood is truly purple and gold. I count it a blessing to teach at the school where he stands at the helm."

Somerset High is consistently ranked among the top schools in Kentucky. The school's academic index on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) has grown from 65.5 in 1998 to 80.3 in 2004. This steady growth on a journey to reach proficiency by 2014 — 100 on a scale of 140 — is a result of collaborative leadership at the school. All teachers, staff members, parents, students and community leaders emphasize success and have high expectations.

In 1998, after Floyd returned to his alma mater as principal, the dynamics of the school began to change and a sense of trust and pride developed among faculty, staff and students.

Student pride is very evident at Somerset High, according to senior Madison Flowers. "Somerset's success is a reflection of our great staff. We have a principal that really cares about his students and a group of teachers that strive to provide the best learning experience for each of us. Every member of the faculty, staff and student body plays a vital role in our school."

Somerset High has implemented programs to maintain a happy, healthy and safe environment for all students and staff. A First Time Offenders Policy addressing drugs/alcohol in the school, a full-time resource officer for the entire district, reorganizing the pep club to recognize academics — as well as athletics — and reintroducing homecoming activities from yesteryear have all contributed to the positive school climate.

Somerset High has created high expectations for all students. The result is a challenging but nurturing environment. This sends key messages to the students that it is okay to achieve at high levels and to pay



Principal Tommy Floyd talks with senior Ivy Ford about a classroom assignment at Somerset High School.

Photo by Rick McComb

attention in class, said Floyd — and that appropriate dress and behavior in and out of the school are important. Students at the school are encouraged to support and mentor each other and to be personally involved.

Superintendent Wilson Sears says that Floyd has repeatedly distinguished himself by being an energetic and enthusiastic advocate for students while also

demonstrating the ability to energize the high school staff. "Mr. Floyd has been diligent, resourceful, and responsible in creative problem solving in the areas of curriculum, staff morale and school finance. His ability as an instructional leader is seldom matched," said Sears.

Contact Tommy Floyd at Somerset High School by phone at (606) 678-4721 or by e-mail at [tfloyd@somerset.k12.ky.us](mailto:tfloyd@somerset.k12.ky.us).



## Talk to Us!

*Kentucky Teacher* wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

**E-mail:** [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us)

**Phone:** (502) 564-3421 or  
(800) 533-5372  
(toll free in Kentucky)

**Fax:** (502) 564-6470

**Write:** Kentucky Teacher  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



# Fifth-graders at Eubank Elementary gain business savvy and skills as entrepreneurs

By Joy Barr  
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

Fifth-graders at Eubank Elementary School learned firsthand this year how to connect the real world to learning. Rather than just reading and listening to lessons about business and economics, students took their knowledge and put the extensive study into action as elementary entrepreneurs.

Sixty fifth-graders in this Pulaski County school were able to blend basic economic concepts with essential business skills as they sold items at the school's first Entrepreneur Fair.

District gifted specialist Lynn Ashbrook helped coordinate the project with Eubank fifth-grade teachers, Ginger Emerson, Paula Hudson and Sheila Sneed. Ashbrook said she was excited about the students' hard work. More importantly, it gave the children experience as they were learning in all core content areas.

In preparation for teaching economics, the teachers attended a summer Toyota Mini-Society workshop sponsored by Toyota Motor Manufacturing. Susan Sandage, with the Kentucky Economics Council, and Harrison County teacher Teresa Duncan, who is a presenter for the council, taught the workshop. They shared ideas on how to implement an entrepreneur unit of study.

During the unit, the Eubank fifth-graders took a field trip to the Toyota plant in Georgetown and the Berea Artisan Center.

As part of the project, students prepared a business proposal, a rental and loan agreement, and a market survey. They also designed advertisements including commercials, business cards and other items to promote their businesses.

Students surveyed a sampling of other students and parents to determine if there was a market for their products or services. They also used the survey to find out what price consumers might be willing to pay for their products or services. Students conducted their surveys before school, on the bus, during lunch, at recess, during free time or in their neighborhoods.

Students rented the gym space for 10 percent of the profit of their business. If their business did not make a profit, they owed nothing. The money collected from the rental fees will be used to purchase award medals for students who scored distinguished on the state assessment. Gross sales for the Entrepreneur Fair were \$1,044 with a profit of \$821.

Students entered into a loan agreement with their parents (or guardians) if they needed to "borrow" money for supplies. Students agreed to repay the money they borrowed plus 1 percent interest.

The fair enabled students to realistically apply economic principles and gain

firsthand business experience through partnerships or a sole proprietorship.

Throughout the project, the students experienced the risks and rewards of owning a business. They learned to identify how economic factors such as availability of resources affect an enterprise. They studied the benefits and risks of a partnership versus sole proprietorship. They figured out how to determine the cost of space for a business. They discovered that a loan is borrowed money that must be repaid with interest and that profit is an incentive for business owners.

The student businesses offered such products as candles, birdhouses, bubble bath, purses, picture frames, balloons, cookies, Kool-Aid and Christmas ornaments.

"This was an awesome experience for the children to put what they learned into practice," said Principal Patrick Richardson. Richardson was a shrewd shopper at the fair but soon invested in Tyler Logan's "Sweeten Your Day" business by purchasing candy from the student.

Kendra Hyden sold Kool-Aid. She sold drinks to the students and emphasized that everyone in a business has to pull their weight and work together for the business to be successful. "If one person does not do his or her share, the business could easily fail," said Kendra.

Other Eubank Elementary students attended the Entrepreneur Fair throughout the day to learn about economics, government and work skills. Parents and other community members were able to attend the fair during the evening after attending the PTA meeting at the school.

First-, second- and third-place prizes were awarded to the most effective businesses as "Business Men or Women of the Year." Five "secret shoppers" evaluated the businesses and the entrepreneurs to determine the winners.

Zac Glover said he used the Internet as a resource to get ideas on what he might sell. His business was "Looney Balloons," and he wore an example of the "product" in his commercial and throughout the fair. He also distributed business cards to create interest in his product.

Ashbrook, the district's gifted specialist, said the experience helped students acquire concepts and skills in multiple subject areas through the economics unit. They learned about setting goals, and developed and experienced real-world business skills. The students used critical-thinking skills such as analyzing, prioritizing, categorizing, evaluating and comparing to solve a variety of problems.

As a part of their final assignment, students wrote reflective pieces that described their experiences as entrepreneurs. Teachers

also used open-response prompts to see if students could apply their knowledge of learned concepts.

For more information, contact Eubank

Principal Patrick Richardson at (606) 379-2712 or send e-mail to prichardson1@pulaski.net.



Photos by Joy Barr

Business owner and fifth-grader Kendra Hyden, above, sells Kool-Aid by the glass to customers who stop by her brightly decorated stand during the Entrepreneur Fair.



Fifth-grader Zac Glover, left, wears one of his "Looney Balloons" creations as he tries to entice customers to his booth at the Entrepreneur Fair.



SCHOOL from Page 1

at South Heights Elementary and the district's two other low-performing schools, instructional leaders in the district decided that all schools would benefit from using the Department of Education's "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI)" as a "lens" with which to evaluate their programs. And, so began the Henderson County Schools' Scholastic Review process in all district schools.

The three Henderson County schools are no longer in assistance. In fact, the district was designated an "Exemplary Growth District" because all schools met their goals or were progressing toward their goals for the 2003-2004 biennium.

During the first year, all schools were asked to do a self study using the SISI document. District staff went into the schools and talked with school leaders about their findings.

Following the first year, the district instructional team decided to go into the schools and document their findings using the SISI document for the Scholastic Review. Schools were required to maintain portfolios that documented their evidence of committee meetings, budgets, school based decision making council meeting agendas and minutes, curriculum, and assessment data.

The organization of the portfolios established a process where schools began to build the documentation of what was or wasn't happening consistently. The district Scholastic Review teams could see very quickly if there was a strong plan of action in place or if the school was struggling to maintain initiatives.

For two years, Central Office staff comprised the Scholastic Review teams. In the past two years, the make-up of the teams has been expanded to include all district principals. Each principal serves on two review teams.

Elementary principals serve on secondary review teams and secondary principals conduct reviews in the elementary schools. In providing this opportunity, the principals have a more global view of the district and a greater appreciation of the work they each do.

Their various perspectives provide for greater discussions and better recommendations for school improvement. Principals also have returned to their buildings and looked at their schools through the eyes of the review team. The SISI standards are much clearer to the principals because they have used them to determine another school's progress versus being on the receiving end of a Scholastic Review report.

The "processing out" is one of the most important parts of a Scholastic Review. The determination of Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 is based on what the team has read or observed. Team members often have lively discussions regarding what they found in their examination of the school's portfolio or observed in classrooms. However, the review team talks to consensus before a

determination is made as to which level the school should receive.

All schools receive a report with commendations, recommendations and suggested next steps. The information provided to schools during the yearly Scholastic Review has been an invaluable component of determining district needs for the Comprehensive Planning processes.

In talking directly with principals, teachers, support staff, students and parents, the district instructional team has a better understanding of what is really happening in the schools and what their needs are in terms of curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development and planning. The principals, in turn, have a better understanding of the district issues and how they must be addressed.

Because the Scholastic Review involves a lot of time, Henderson County Schools has established a five-year timeline during which all schools will have a full Scholastic Review using all nine standards from the SISI document. During the other visits, the review team will only utilize Standard 1 Curriculum, Standard 2 Assessment, Standard 3 Instruction and Standard 9 Planning. These four standards are at the center of change for our district.

In addition to the Scholastic Reviews at schools, the Central Office staff asked the principals to evaluate the effectiveness of its response to school needs. The District SISI document was used for the review.

The principals made commendations and recommendations for each of the nine standards. District staff has worked to accomplish the principal recommendations, which included being in the schools more often, working toward better communication, establishing a district curriculum committee and making provisions for secondary curriculum specialists.

In summary, the "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement" documents have been an in-

tegral part of the changes our schools — and district — are making to improve student learning. The Scholastic Review process provides continuity and a means to evaluate all schools using the same "measuring stick" to determine progress toward proficiency.

There has been a great deal of positive change from the Scholastic Review process in Henderson County Schools, as documented by increased school scores.

Any district or school that is looking for ways to improve will benefit from the process of the review — as well as the findings for change.

For more information regarding this school improvement program, contact Nancy Satterfield, assistant superintendent for Support Programs, Henderson County Schools at (270) 831-8743, nsatterf@henderson.k12.ky.us.



Photo by Rick McComb

A comfortable read

Primary student Faith Baker has discovered a comfortable place to stretch out and read a new library book in the foyer of Southern Elementary in Pendleton County. Schools throughout Kentucky will celebrate reading during Read Across America Day on March 2, the birthday of American author Dr. Seuss.



# TEACHER

from Page 1

with professionals (artists) in the field and learn how easy it is to incorporate art into regular classroom lessons. It makes learning more fun for students, I think.”

As a result of her participation in the Arts Academy, Cassidy learned about grants available through several sources, including the Kentucky Arts Council, to bring an artist into her classroom. She applied for and received an Arts Academy Follow-Up grant that allowed her and her students to collaborate with painter Pat Banks on an art project. Banks worked for a week at Ohio County Middle as part of the standards-based unit of study Cassidy created around “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

Cassidy’s three language arts classes read the diary written by a Jewish teenage girl during World War II. As part of the unit, students completed writing assignments, answered writing prompts, kept a journal and explored the history of the Holocaust and social issues like anti-Semitism.

The middle school teacher drew upon her Arts Academy training to involve students in role-playing. She also devised a simulation activity that imposed restrictions on students marked with “blue dots” similar to what Anne Frank’s family experienced with their Star of David badges.

Students also designed a mural for a hallway at their school. Using what they learned from the diary and their research

about the war years in Europe, the three classes selected images for the mural and voted on what they wanted to create. “The project evoked a lot of emotion because there aren’t many different cultures in our community,” Cassidy said.

Then students met with Banks, the artist, to finalize what they could accomplish during her residency in the school. “The students had lofty goals,” Cassidy said. “I do well to draw stick figures. You really need an artist to help with the planning.”

Once Banks and the students agreed on the overall design, students and about a dozen parents began work on the mural. They completed the painting after three days of intensive work.

“I encourage other teachers to sign up for the Arts Academy,” Cassidy said. “You learn from great performers. You can’t get better PD. It’s so easy to incorporate the arts into what you do. It helps content knowledge, and it’s fun stuff your students will never forget.”

In addition to the grant that allowed the creation of the mural, Cassidy said she received “tons of free stuff” that she continues to incorporate in her language arts classes. She received the Drama Toolkit, classical music on CD-ROM, video clips from plays and much more.

She continues to use drama exercises and role-playing strategies from her summer training as regular parts of her language arts classes. “We do a lot of movement in



Photo by Danielle Cassidy, Ohio County Schools

Eighth-grade language arts students at Ohio County Middle School work on a mural they designed to depict scenes from World War II in Europe. Though it was painted two years ago, the mural remains a tool Danielle Cassidy and other teachers can use when teaching history and literature of the era.

my classes,” she said.

In addition to Arts Academies, teachers can find Teacher Academies geographically distributed for K-12 social studies, science, mathematics, practical living, and middle and high school reading. For more information about the 2005 Teacher Academies, go to [www.education.gov](http://www.education.gov) and enter “Teacher Academies” in the keyword/search box in the upper right-hand corner.

That page will link teachers to the individual academies and applications.

To learn about The Kentucky Center’s Arts Academy, contact Jeffrey Jamner, director of school programs, (502) 562-0703, [jjamner@kentuckycenter.org](mailto:jjamner@kentuckycenter.org).

For more information about Cassidy’s “The Diary of Anne Frank” unit, contact Danielle Cassidy at (270) 274-7893, Ext. 210, [dcassady@ohio.k12.ky.us](mailto:dcassady@ohio.k12.ky.us).

# BOARD

from Page 1

humanities for the upcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) that will be used to determine the state’s next testing contractor. Commissioner Gene Wilhoit suggested the board study new ways to assess these content areas in future assessments.

The Department of Education has been reviewing content standards across all academic areas in preparation for the RFP. The board heard an update on the department’s work and will make decisions regarding the content standards’ organization at its April meeting.

The board also agreed to make amendments to the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) transportation formula, but only on the condition that the formula is fully funded. The amendments would include:

- Funding all public school students transported to and from school, regardless of the distance from their homes to school
- Eliminating the deduction of areas not primarily served in the square-mile area of school districts
- Reducing the school bus depreciation schedule from 14 years to 10 years
- Limiting the funding of districts defined as “outliers”

The board gave final approval to the Annual Professional Development Plan.

The plan seeks to improve professional development offerings and to keep school districts in compliance with professional development requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

The board agreed to provide support to low-performing schools not currently defined as being in assistance based on their performance on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). More than \$500,000 is available to these schools through Commonwealth School Improvement Funds and other resources. Eligible schools would participate in a Scholastic Audit.

The board heard a presentation from David Couch, associate commissioner in the department’s Office of Education Technology. He discussed the readiness of schools and district offices for online assessments and other large-scale online applications.

Districts recently participated in an online readiness survey. The survey asked districts about the capability of technology components, as well as the technology literacy skills of teachers and students, and the abilities of local district technology staff to keep the technology components running reliably.

Couch said data from the survey indicate that a majority of workstations within school buildings have access to

high-speed networks. However, most workstations are too old to run modern and near-future, large-scale applications that the board is considering adopting, he said.

As far as student and teacher knowledge, Couch said the survey indicates the more teachers use technology in their daily instruction, the more comfortable and capable they will be giving their students an online assessment. According to the

districts’ self-reported data, 70 percent of Kentucky’s teachers meet the state’s technology skills teacher requirements.

The next meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be April 6 and 7 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on “KDE QuickLinks” in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to “State Board of Education” and click.

## Changed your address?

*Kentucky Teacher* receives mailing addresses for all Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers’ Retirement System. If you are currently employed by a Kentucky school, you can change your address in one of two ways:

- by completing a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system’s Web site at <http://ktrs.org/ktrsresources/meminfo/chgaddrnew.htm>
- by submitting a written request that includes your old address, new address and your social security number

Mail the form or your own written request to:  
Kentucky Teachers’ Retirement System  
Attn: Tammy Brown  
479 Versailles Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us) or send your change of address information in writing to:  
*Kentucky Teacher*  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



# Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr  
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

## KDE releases test items

The Kentucky Department of Education has released new test items from the 2004 Kentucky Core Content Tests. These items are representative of questions that students will see when testing.

Each content area and grade level has a set of multiple-choice questions and open-response items. Not all sub-domain areas will have released items.

Each item is accompanied by the academic expectations and core content addressed by the items, and correct answers are provided for each. Information is included on how students performed on the items during the 2004 assessment: percentage of students who answered the multiple-choice items correctly and percentage of student receiving points (Blank, 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4) on the open-response questions.

Later this year, the department will release sample student responses annotated to the scoring guide and instructional connections to help enhance teaching and learning in Kentucky.

To see the released items, go to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), click on "KDE QuickLinks" and select "Kentucky Core Content Test Released Items."

## Perkins Accountability Reports are released

Perkins Accountability Reports (Career and Technical Education District and School Profiles, Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessments and Perkins Performance Measures Annual Reports) are available for viewing, downloading and printing.

To access the reports, go to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), and enter "Perkins Accountability" in the keyword/search box in the upper right corner of the page.

## Kentucky Reading Project sites named

The Kentucky Reading Project (KRP) is a professional development initiative for Kentucky public school elementary teachers. It is designed to improve student achievement and emphasize family involvement in literacy. Twenty elementary schools have agreed to serve as demonstration sites to highlight best practices in literacy instruction. The teachers in these schools agree to provide opportunities for observation, consultation and professional development for other teachers, as well as school and district personnel. The demonstration sites are:

Park City Elementary in Barren County, Kelly Elementary in Boone

County, Summit Elementary in Boyd County, Old Mill Elementary and Roby Elementary in Bullitt County, Fannie Bush Elementary in Clark County, Paces Creek Elementary in Clay County, Helmswood Heights Elementary in Elizabethtown Independent, A.J. Lindeman Elementary in Erlanger-Elsmere Independent, Rosa Parks Elementary in Fayette County, Hattie C. Warner Elementary in Jessamine County, Model Laboratory Elementary in Madison County, Botts Elementary in Menifee County, Mt. Sterling Elementary in Montgomery County, Murray Elementary in Murray Independent, Cravens Elementary in Owensboro Independent, Clark Elementary in Paducah Independent, Russell Primary in Russell Independent, Garth Elementary in Scott

County and Taylor County Elementary in Taylor County.

For more information, contact Cary Pappas with the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development at (859) 257-6118. [www.kentuckyliteracy.org/kyccld1.html](http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/kyccld1.html)

## More students passed AP exams during 2004

At a time when the academic performance of U.S. high school students has come under scrutiny, the College Board offers some good news. More students are passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams in every part of the country, as college-level work in high school becomes increasingly common — and competitive.

The organization that administers the

AP testing program found that in every state, the percentage of public school students who passed at least one AP test was up in 2004. In Kentucky, 7.7 percent of Kentucky's Class of 2004 passed an AP test.

The AP program began as an experiment for high school students seeking college courses and credit. It has now become a standard course offering in most public schools. Admission offices at many colleges and universities say they place more importance on grades in college-prep courses such as AP.

## Loan forgiveness limits raised for teacher loans

Do you teach mathematics, science or special education? Have you taught for five years in a Title I school? If you answered yes to both of these questions, you may be eligible for new loan forgiveness limits recently signed into law, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act (P.L. 108-409) authorizes up to \$17,500 in loan forgiveness to eligible highly qualified mathematics, science and special education teachers. This increase of \$12,500 above the previous loan limits is meant to ease the shortage of teachers in key subject areas. The increased amount of teacher loan forgiveness is available to new borrowers (teachers with no outstanding loan balances prior to Oct. 1, 1998, who borrow eligible loans prior to Oct. 1, 2005). The additional loan forgiveness should provide substantial relief for current teachers and an incentive for prospective teachers to teach in subjects and schools that have difficulty hiring highly qualified candidates.

Details are available at [www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0414.html](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0414.html)

## Expectation gap exists

A recent study shows that few of the nation's high school students are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work. The study, "The Expectations Gap — A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements," finds that states do not expect their graduates to take courses that truly reflect the real-world demands of life after high school. Released by Achieve Inc., the study finds that students can take the courses necessary to meet graduation requirements yet still leave high school unprepared. In order to be fully prepared for work and postsecondary education, the study recommends that every high school student take a minimum of four years of rigorous mathematics and four years of grade-level English.

For more information about the study and its findings, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).



Photos by Rick McComb

## National Board Certified Teachers

Tammy Tackett and Carrie Thomas, teachers at Southern Elementary in Pendleton County, are among the 194 Kentucky teachers who received certification in 2004 by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. In addition to supporting each other during the rigorous certification process, these teachers collaborate in the classroom on projects such as a recent "Space Camp" to teach their students about space and how to use technology in making classroom presentations. Above, Tackett helps third-grader Ashley Clark develop her computer presentation about space. Below, Thomas and fourth-grade student Alexa Hodge talk about the points Alexa will make in her computer presentation.





# Students learn the ‘bear’ facts of the world



By Cathy Lindsey  
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

Have you ever wanted to drop everything and hitch a ride to a far-away place, traveling from here to there — all over the world — until your journey brings you home again? Imagine the adventures you would have and the things you would learn!

Thanks to 12 stuffed teddy bears, fourth-graders at New Highland Elementary in Hardin County are experiencing such adventures in Paris, Israel, Korea and China — just to name a few — without ever leaving their classroom.

“It’s been good to bring the outside world back inside the classroom,” said special education teacher Kaytie Georgel. “Kids can read about all these places in a book, but making a connection with a place through the bears is making a lasting impression with them.”

Georgel and regular classroom teacher Lana Mitchell collaborate in writing, reading and science instruction. Last fall, they wanted to give their students opportunities to experience foreign places they may never visit. They asked members of the community to donate teddy bears so their students could send out the stuffed animals as class ambassadors to the world.

Students voted on what to name each bear and then decided how to dress each one. Each “geobear” is outfitted with a backpack that carries a note explaining that he wants to be a world traveler. Each bear carries the school’s address and a logbook so that those he meets along the way will write the class to share the adventure and document all the places the bear travels. One bear hitched a ride with the school’s UPS carrier. Another hopped in the cab of

an 18-wheeler with a driver from Harry Owen Trucking. One bear traveled by air with a Continental Airlines pilot. The rest tagged along with other travelers.

The Hardin County bears have crisscrossed the globe. The class has received postcards, letters and pictures from locations as near as New Jersey and as far away as Australia and Iraq. Students are documenting the bears’ travels on a wall map with different colors of yarn to represent each of the bears’ journeys.

As the class follows each journey, they have a lesson about where the bear is traveling. They are learning state capitals, calculating miles traveled, honing their mapping skills, learning about the history, geography, culture, climate, animals and interesting facts of places around the world.

In December, the bears made their way back to New Highland Elementary. Their backpacks and logbooks were loaded with information about where the bears had traveled and whom they had met along the way. Some bears even brought treats for the students.

“The students really enjoyed sampling chocolate from Korea,” Georgel said. “We actually did a compare and contrast open response on Korean chocolate and American chocolate.”

Students then put their creative skills to work by creating scrapbooks for each bear including pictures, postcards and memorabilia from each trip.

The geobears are on the road

once again this semester. Each of their backpacks carries a note explaining they would like to be home by May so the students can complete their project before summer break.

“We do have one bear that is MIA (Missing In Adventure),” Georgel explained. “Pinky is a pink bear measuring approximately 12 inches in

height. Pinky was last seen in Africa wearing a purple bow around her neck with a clear backpack. If anyone knows her whereabouts, please contact the school.”

Georgel feels this is a worthwhile project not only because of the shared enthusiasm of the students and teachers, but also because it allows the students to experience the

bears’ adventures through social studies, geography, mathematics and writing.

“This has truly been a wonderful learning experience,” she said. “The students feel like a piece of them has traveled the world.”

For more information on the traveling teddies, contact Kaytie Georgel at kgeorgel@hardin.k12.ky.us or (270) 737-6612.



Special education teacher Kaytie Georgel, left, and fourth-graders at New Highland Elementary listen as teacher Lana Mitchell reads postcards from geobears that are visiting exotic places around the world.



Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Lexington, Kentucky  
Permit No. 1

Photos by Rick McComb